



**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 11, 2014**

Department of Housing Budget
Hearing on Conservation and Development

Testimony of Betsy Crum, Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this evening. My name is Betsy Crum, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

I would like to speak to you today about the Department of Housing Budget. First, it has been my honor and pleasure to have participated as a member of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing over the past year, and to have represented our broad membership on that committee. At the Connecticut Housing Coalition, we hear every day from families who need housing, and understand the critical role it plays in creating a healthy, sustainable state. I would like to highlight just a few facts:

- On average in Connecticut, a full-time worker needs to earn \$23.58/hour to afford a modest 2-bedroom apartment. More than half (50%) of all jobs pay less than this on an hourly basis.
- An estimated two-thirds (66%) of all renters in Connecticut are unable to afford the typical apartment.
- Approximately 90,000 households in our state pay more than one-half of their incomes on housing costs.
- Housing is now the #1 subject of all calls for help to Infoline/211.

Our Coalition strongly supports the Governor's Budget proposals to enhance funding for supportive and affordable housing. Specifically, these include:

- New Units of Scattered Site Supportive Housing: The budget includes an annualized \$2.2 million for 110 rental assistance program certificates and related supportive services.



- Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Renters: The budget provides \$6.5 million to reopen intake to the Renter's Rebate program, which offers rebates of up to \$900 for married couples and \$700 for single individuals.
- Housing Authority Capacity Building: The budget funds two positions in the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) to provide individualized technical assistance to housing authorities.
- Rapid Re-Housing and Rental Assistance: The budget provides \$1 million for RAP certificates and \$650,000 for rapid rehousing initiatives in the Department of Housing through carry forward funding from FY 2014.
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): The budget adds \$7 million in capital funding to support TOD activities along the new CTFastrak and New Haven commuter rail line.
- Prioritizing Security Deposit Assistance to Homeless Veterans: The budget provides \$50,000 to increase the availability of security deposit assistance for homeless veterans, and establishes a priority for veterans under the program.
- Enhancing Residential Options and Supportive Services for Veterans: The budget provides \$500,000 to begin work on additional housing for veterans on the Department of Veterans' Affairs Rocky Hill campus.

Affordable and supportive housing in Connecticut has come a very long way in recent years. The Governor's plan to continue a sustained and significant investment in creating new affordable housing for families, people experiencing homelessness and our veterans signals his great commitment to the health, prosperity and sustainability of our state and to the well-being of all of the citizens within our state. I urge you to support this investment.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.